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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000765

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR IIP/FO (PENGLAND), NEA/I, NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [PREL](#) [OIIP](#) [IZ](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING SUPPORT FOR THE IRAQI TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT

REF: A. SECSTATE 79107

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 581

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request for IIP, NEA/PPD - see para [1](#)6.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: Omani Foreign Minister Bin Alawi offered in a May 11 meeting with the Ambassador to give an interview in Muscat to the Al Hurra channel to voice public support for the new Iraqi Transitional Government. He expressed disappointment that the elections and new government, however, appear not to have brought an improvement in Iraq's security conditions, wondering if the government were strong enough and security services adequately armed and equipped. He reviewed some limited Omani training assistance for Iraqis, and indicated Oman could disburse its reconstruction assistance pledge during a future visit by the Iraqi Foreign Minister. End summary.

Eager for Al Hurra Interview on ITG

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Embassy provided ref A demarche material to the Foreign Ministry May 3 requesting Oman's public support for the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG). In a May 11 meeting with the Ambassador, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi responded, noting that he had previously spoken out in praise of the new Iraqi government (ref B), and that Oman likewise publicized the letters of congratulation that the Sultan had sent to the new Iraqi leadership. Asked by the Ambassador if there were more Oman could do to voice its support of the ITG, the Minister voluntarily offered to give an interview on the topic with Al Hurra. He requested the Embassy to pass his offer along, saying that he will "be happy" to do the interview in Muscat. He praised Al Hurra for its moderate tone and journalistic ethics, complaining that the correspondents from regional networks such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya seek only to "provoke" their interviewees.

Omani Aid, Disappointment with Security Situation

[1](#)4. (SBU) With regard to following through on Oman's prior commitment to contribute up to \$5 million for Iraqi reconstruction, the Minister replied that he believes the Cabinet has approved the amount, and said Muscat is waiting for a future visit by the Iraqi Foreign Minister to provide the opportune time to disburse the funds. Bin Alawi also noted that the Ministry of Health will soon take on 5 Iraqis to begin a 2-year medical training program. There are also two Iraqi diplomats currently enrolled in the MFA's Diplomatic Institute. (Note: The Iraqi diplomats attended the Ambassador's May 10 address to the Diplomatic Institute - septel. End note.)

[1](#)5. (SBU) Asked whether Oman might pitch in with training on the security front, Bin Alawi claimed that Egypt has offered to train 20,000 Iraqi security personnel but thus far only 170 Iraqis have taken them up on the offer. The Minister likewise cited increasing complaints from Iraqi military and police personnel who claim they are not given adequate arms and other equipment to defend themselves or protect the public. He was disturbed that the Iraqi elections and formation of the ITG have apparently done nothing to quell the number of car-bombings and other violence, suggesting that the ITG may be too weak to govern effectively. The Minister stated frankly that he had expected more improvement by now.

Action Request

[1](#)6. (U) The Embassy requests the Department's assistance in facilitating an interview on Al Hurra for Minister Bin Alawi.
BALTIMORE